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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT KIRKUK: THE TURKMAN BLOC PRESENTS ITS DEMANDS
ONE MORE TIME

REF: BAGHDAD 586

Classified By: PRT Kirkuk Team Leader Howard Keegan for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Kirkuk reporting cable.

12. (C) Summary. At a February 24th negotiation session, the Turkman bloc, led by Ali Mahdi, presented again its seven item demand list in the hope of using President Talibani's recent endorsement as a lever to success. The negotiation session was a point by point discussion of each of the seven points on the Turkman list: a Turkman Governor, Deputy Governor or Provincial Council (PC) chair; the official use of the Turkmani language; joint provincial administration; resolution of contested occupation of public and private lands; an ethnically equitable reconstruction program; de-politicization of the provincial reconstruction and development program; and cessation of harassment of Turkman DGs. The Turkman bloc remains adamant that all both parties agree to all points simultaneously and that the language issue be the first resolved in the session. Failing complete agreement, even though several points were agreed, both parties decided to schedule a subsequent meeting on March 2, 12008. End Summary.

13. (C) On February 24, the Turkman bloc, led by Ali Mahdi, once again presented its seven item demand with the hope of using President Talibani's recent endorsement as negotiating leverage. As PRT anticipated, the negotiation was framed as an all or nothing session. Because the Kirkuk Brotherhood List negotiators could not accept all points on the spot, both parties agreed to an additional session on Sunday, March 2, 2008.

14. (C) The first Turkman demand was to have one of the "top three" positions in the province, the Governor, Deputy Governor, or the PC Chair. As any concession on this point would violate the KBL-Arab bloc bilateral agreement that requires a single deputy governor, the KBL could not accede to this demand. Both parties will examine their positions on this point for the next meeting.

15. (C) The KBL team accepted the Turkman bloc demand for the use of the Turkman language as an official language in principle, but will look for a legal basis for accepting and implementing the agreement. They discussed the Constitution's ambiguous language, which, in the KBL opinion, does not allow implementation without additional national-level legislation.

16. (C) Both parties agreed to a joint administration in principle using an executive committee mechanism similar to the one in the KBL-Arab bloc bilateral agreement. Even so, the Turkman bloc requires clarification on how the Executive Committee would implement the agreement so that the Turkman bloc would retain its 32 percent set-aside of government

positions.

¶7. (C) The Kurdish returnee/immigrant illegal occupation of public and private lands was the fourth issue the parties addressed. Both parties agreed to employ the same mechanism contained in the KBL-Arab bloc agreement. The Turkman negotiators required additional time to study that mechanism in detail before accepting it.

¶8. (C) Both parties agreed in principle on the need for a balanced reconstruction effort spread equitably across all ethnic areas. Again, the Turkman team required more time to study this provision in the KBL-Arab agreement.

¶9. (C) The Turkman team asserted that the PC was allocating capital projects inequitably. Rizgar Ali, the PC Chair, reviewed a list of projects that refuted this assertion, leaving the Turkman team passively acquiescent on this point.

¶10. (C) The Turkman list required the cessation of "harassment" of the DGs, implicitly, the Education DG. However, the discussion on this point changed to a different topic; access to Kurdish-controlled offices and facilities. The Turkman argued that they are routinely kept waiting or denied access that other groups routinely receive. The teams did not reach a tentative agreement on this point.

¶11. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, Rizgar tried to obtain a written agreement on the agreed points. However, the Turkman negotiators would not accept this, insisting that both parties must agree to all points simultaneously. Ali Mahdi, at one point during the session, loudly proclaimed that he did not trust or believe the PC Chairman's positions on the issues.

¶12. (C) Comment: The Turkman bloc request to resume negotiations is significant and probably indicative of the failure of their recent efforts to bolster their position with outside support. The Constitution leaves the language issue to the PC to determine and the KBL does not have an internal consensus on the meaning of the words "density" and "administrative unit" as they apply to this case. There was discussion in the meeting on referring the issue to the judicial system for adjudication but it is unlikely that this approach will provide the explanations the KBL seeks since no legal case exists before the court. In that case, it is unlikely the court will take any action. The Turkman bloc requires province-wide acceptance of the Turkman language as an official language as part of any agreement. The Turkman bloc believed that since Talibani had given them a verbal agreement (reftel), this meeting was to be a mere formality. Their lack of flexibility may indicate that elements in Ankara control them. It was obvious that they were unfamiliar with the KBL-Arab bloc agreement, again indicating they did not expect to negotiate a similar agreement. As PRT anticipated, Ali Mahdi was more obstructionist than his compatriots but his presence back at the table and the give-and-take of the meeting provide an opening for the next meeting. End Comment.
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